

Experiences of Dislocated Workers, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Advanced Manufacturing

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Abstract

This paper explores the lived experiences of one group of dislocated workers in a hybrid advanced manufacturing training course in one large Midwestern city who became dislocated through the downsizing of a large manufacturing facility and who took advantage of Trade Adjustment Assistance. The research questions relate to these workers' perceptions about the ease/difficulty of accessing the program, barriers to implementation of the program, and the effectiveness of the program in their own lives. Current adjustment policies for dislocated workers lend themselves to recreating and widening the wage inequality in the United States. By promoting policies that encourage rapid reintegration into the workforce and discouraging the education, training, and self-employment of dislocated workers, dislocated workers are forced into lower paying jobs in the service sector, which typically pay lower wages. Consequences of these policies are not only decreased standards of living for these workers, who are typically eligible for government transfer payments, but emotional, social, and mental and physical health problems as well. Serious consideration for policy changes should be deemed of utmost importance.